

## Useful links and places:

### **-Catholic Worker international websites:**

[www.catholicworker.com](http://www.catholicworker.com)

[www.catholicworker.org](http://www.catholicworker.org)

[www.lacatholicworker.org](http://www.lacatholicworker.org)

[www.ca.geocities.com/vancouvercatholicworker](http://www.ca.geocities.com/vancouvercatholicworker)

### **-Radical/Progressive Christianity**

[www.jesusradicals.org](http://www.jesusradicals.org)

[www.nonviolentjesus.blogspot.com](http://www.nonviolentjesus.blogspot.com)

<http://www.geezmagazine.org>

[www.catholicanarchy.org](http://www.catholicanarchy.org)

[www.anglocatholicsocialism.org](http://www.anglocatholicsocialism.org)

[www.disseminary.org](http://www.disseminary.org)

[www.tierra-nueva.org](http://www.tierra-nueva.org)

[www.thepeoplesseminary.org](http://www.thepeoplesseminary.org)

### **-Anti-War**

[www.stopwar.ca](http://www.stopwar.ca)

[www.ivaw.net](http://www.ivaw.net)

[www.resisters.ca](http://www.resisters.ca)

[www.wri-irg.org](http://www.wri-irg.org)

### **-Other Activism**

[www.foodnotbombs.net](http://www.foodnotbombs.net)

[www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook)

[www.iww.org](http://www.iww.org)

[www.deathpenalty.org](http://www.deathpenalty.org)

[www.lovarchy.org](http://www.lovarchy.org)

[www.eugenevdebs.com](http://www.eugenevdebs.com)

[www.freegan.info/?page=home](http://www.freegan.info/?page=home)

[www.justicia4migrantworkers.org](http://www.justicia4migrantworkers.org)

### **-Cool Places:**

[www.gnn.tv](http://www.gnn.tv)

[www.spartacusbooks.org](http://www.spartacusbooks.org)

<http://www.bcm-net.org/>

[www.southcentralfarmers.com](http://www.southcentralfarmers.com)

[www.commongroundrelief.org](http://www.commongroundrelief.org)

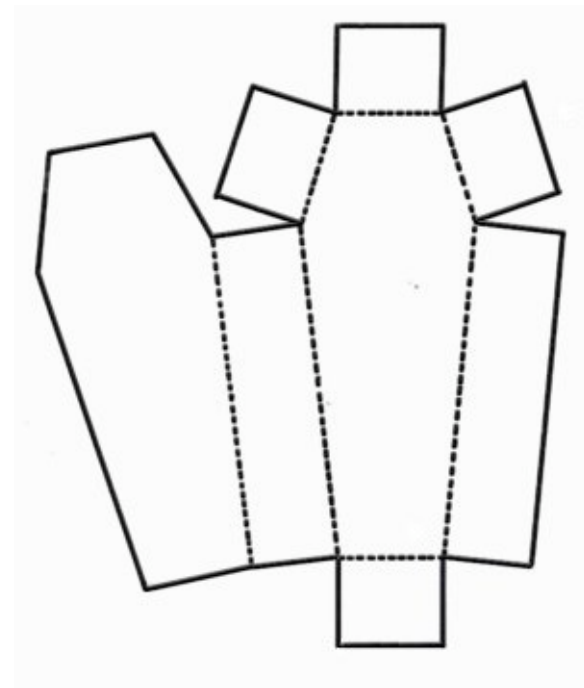
[www.freewebs.com/stormnyc/index.htm](http://www.freewebs.com/stormnyc/index.htm)

[www.jonahhouse.org](http://www.jonahhouse.org)

# The Christian Radical.

A Journal of Progressive Christian Thought and Opinion

Vol. 1 Issue: 9 July 2006, \$0.00 (free)



## What Los Angeles Did to the Farm

Gerardo Gomez  
Homeless Activist and  
South Central Farm Supporter

On Tuesday, June 13th, at about 5 in the morning, the sheriffs came into the South Central Farm and followed through with the eviction that was posed on the South Central Farmers. This 14 acre land for 14 years used to be known as the largest urban farm in the nation. It was also the jewel of the city. For a little over 3 years, the farmers along with their supporters have been trying to get the city and their developer, Mr. Horowitz, to allow them to cultivate the land and continue growing organic fruits and vegetables. But, on June 13th this came to an end. On that day, the ambitions of a wealthy developer decided that self sustainability was getting in the way of his plans to take over the land and construct a warehouse. On June 13th, Mr. Horowitz shattered the dreams of the 350 families who for so long cultivated the land to put food on the table. 14 years are not easy to replace. 14 years of growing your food cannot be replaced if you are sent to another small plot to start over and plant your fruit and vegetables.

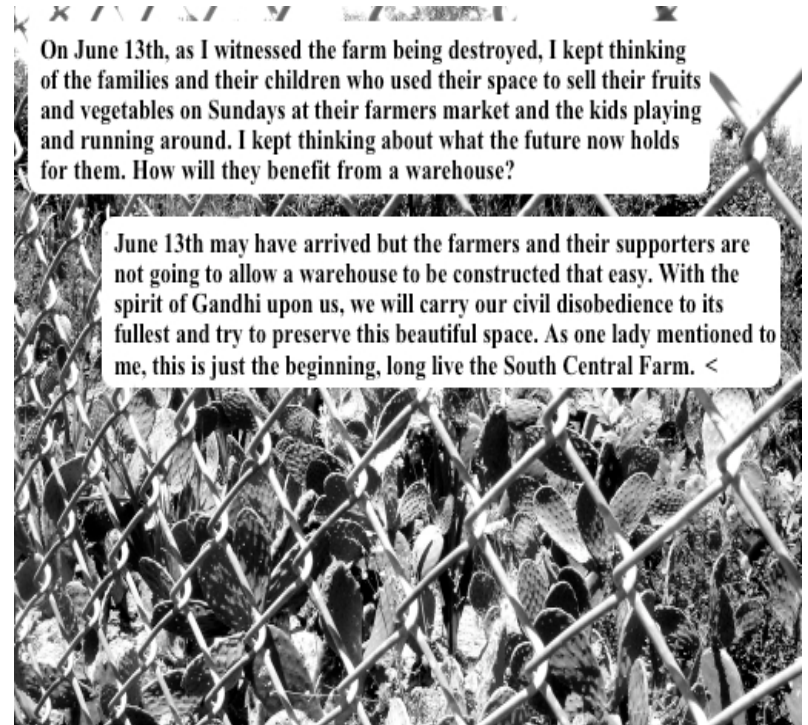
Antonio Villaraigosa, the mayor of Los Angeles mentioned that he wanted to make Los Angeles one of the greener cities in the nation. One cannot carry a vision of making Los Angeles a greener city and yet allow the destruction of the largest urban farm in the country. A greener city is not just about planting trees, but using the South Central Farm as a model and spreading it to other communities.

Mr. Horowitz thinks that creating a warehouse in those 14 acres will create jobs for the residents of South Central Los Angeles. But, for so long, the community have voiced their opinions. They don't want any warehouses. They want food. Most of the farmers, if not all, have an income at or below the poverty level. The food that they cultivated for 14 years gave them the opportunity to feed their children and have the money that would otherwise spend on food go to pay the bills and the rent.



On June 13th, as I witnessed the farm being destroyed, I kept thinking of the families and their children who used their space to sell their fruits and vegetables on Sundays at their farmers market and the kids playing and running around. I kept thinking about what the future now holds for them. How will they benefit from a warehouse?

June 13th may have arrived but the farmers and their supporters are not going to allow a warehouse to be constructed that easy. With the spirit of Gandhi upon us, we will carry our civil disobedience to its fullest and try to preserve this beautiful space. As one lady mentioned to me, this is just the beginning, long live the South Central Farm. <



## A Time For Mutiny?

By Robert S. Finnegan

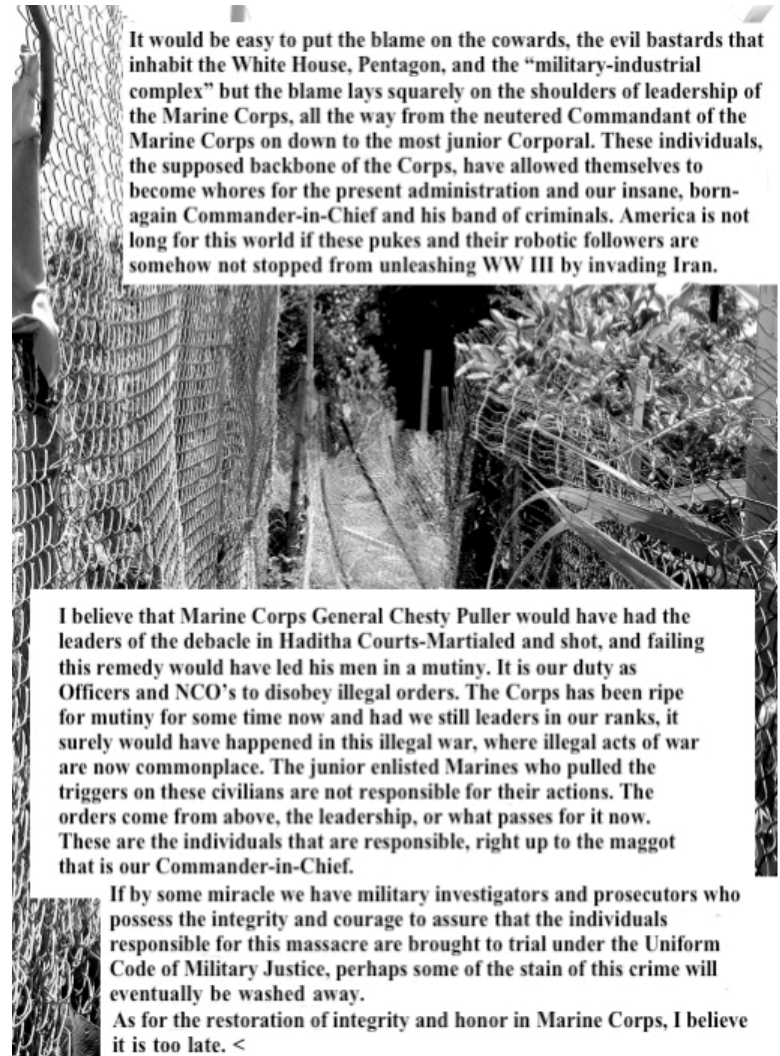
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Prior to this war, we were trained to be killers, not murderers. We killed combatants, not women and children.

The United States Marine Corps was already on it's last legs as an elite fighting force, our reputation sullied by the dishonorable and sometimes criminal actions perpetrated by bottom of the barrel Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers in Iraq. Now this. We are now observing the death throes of the oldest fighting force in America.

We had a good run, from November 10, 1775 to 2006. These dates may now be etched into the tombstone of an institution that has epitomized the meaning of the phrase "Duty, Honor, Country." Sure, we had our warts over the decades, but somehow our leaders throughout the many wars we fought managed to pull back from the brink and handle our problems internally. No more. From the Commandant on down, with this incident, this atrocity, the Corps has shown the world that it is now leaderless. The Marine Corps is now in the same league with the American Division in My Lai, Vietnam and a Lieutenant by the name of Calley. Murderers.

Prior to this war, we were trained to be killers, not murderers. We killed combatants, not women and children. Murder was not only not condoned, it was punished in the extreme as we envisioned ourselves as the "good guys" among the armed forces, at least when it came to helping and protecting civilians in the countries we fought in. In the not too distant past, Marines died assisting civilians, as we have since our inception. The CAP (Civil Action Patrol) program in Vietnam is a prime example of Marines helping civilians above and beyond the call of duty. This is but one example, one side of the Corps that didn't see much ink. We took pride in our work. Many Marines died protecting civilians throughout our long history, and look at us now.



It would be easy to put the blame on the cowards, the evil bastards that inhabit the White House, Pentagon, and the "military-industrial complex" but the blame lays squarely on the shoulders of leadership of the Marine Corps, all the way from the neutered Commandant of the Marine Corps on down to the most junior Corporal. These individuals, the supposed backbone of the Corps, have allowed themselves to become whores for the present administration and our insane, born-again Commander-in-Chief and his band of criminals. America is not long for this world if these pukes and their robotic followers are somehow not stopped from unleashing WW III by invading Iran.

I believe that Marine Corps General Chesty Puller would have had the leaders of the debacle in Haditha Courts-Martialed and shot, and failing this remedy would have led his men in a mutiny. It is our duty as Officers and NCO's to disobey illegal orders. The Corps has been ripe for mutiny for some time now and had we still leaders in our ranks, it surely would have happened in this illegal war, where illegal acts of war are now commonplace. The junior enlisted Marines who pulled the triggers on these civilians are not responsible for their actions. The orders come from above, the leadership, or what passes for it now. These are the individuals that are responsible, right up to the maggot that is our Commander-in-Chief.

If by some miracle we have military investigators and prosecutors who possess the integrity and courage to assure that the individuals responsible for this massacre are brought to trial under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, perhaps some of the stain of this crime will eventually be washed away.

As for the restoration of integrity and honor in Marine Corps, I believe it is too late. <



**In Palestine,**  
By Joy Ellison

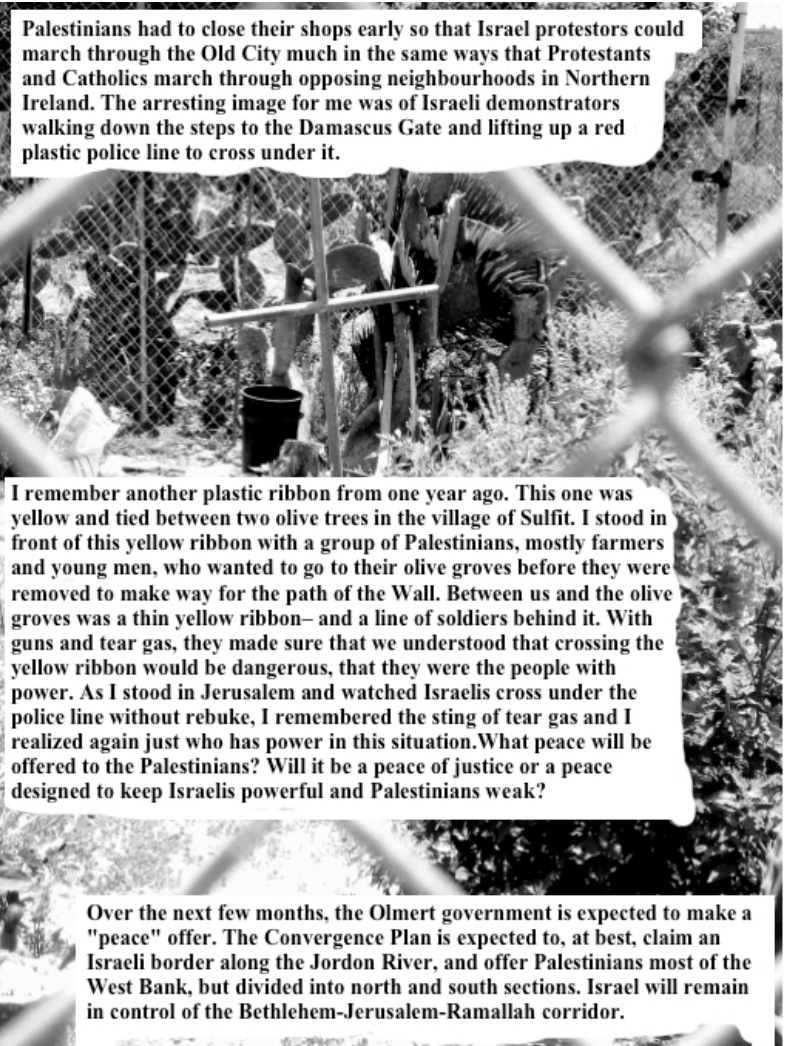
*"Peace be With You"*

I wish it were possible to prepare myself for returning to Palestine. When I arrived in Tel Aviv, I wrote the address of an Israeli contact on my entry card. The woman behind the glass asked me only two questions before stamping my passport and waiving me through. I was elated to receive a visa so easily and stepped out of the airport feeling buoyant and hopeful. Then I took a taxi to Jerusalem and entered a land of ever-accelerating military occupation.

When I visited Bethlehem a year ago, the Israeli settlement of Har Homa seemed scattered and small, hardly worth mentioning. Now it dominates the view from the hilltop of Bethlehem. One year ago, the checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem was a gap in the wall, manned by a soldier and his gun. Now the checkpoint is barely recognizable. The soldier has been replaced with a terminal— a huge complex of lanes, interrogation rooms, high tech cameras, and soldiers. One year ago, I could still see Rachael's tomb inside Bethlehem. Now the Wall, 25ft of seemingly impenetrable cement, surrounds this holy sight. The settlement, the terminal and the Wall, each feel to me like a paralyzing ache. For the first time I feel my optimism flagging. I wonder how Palestinian non-violent resistance can possibly keep pace with the occupation of the world's fourth largest military power.

On the side of the new terminal, the Israeli government has erected a sign which reads in Hebrew, Arabic, and English "Peace Be With You." I am left to wonder what sort of peace the Israeli government has in mind.

I arrived in Jerusalem in time for an annual event that Israelis call "Jerusalem Day." Jerusalem Day commemorates in the anniversary of the unification of Jerusalem — when Israel took over control of East Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967. I heard Israelis describe the event as a festival— with flags and singing and dancing— but I watched as



Palestinians had to close their shops early so that Israel protestors could march through the Old City much in the same ways that Protestants and Catholics march through opposing neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland. The arresting image for me was of Israeli demonstrators walking down the steps to the Damascus Gate and lifting up a red plastic police line to cross under it.

I remember another plastic ribbon from one year ago. This one was yellow and tied between two olive trees in the village of Sulfit. I stood in front of this yellow ribbon with a group of Palestinians, mostly farmers and young men, who wanted to go to their olive groves before they were removed to make way for the path of the Wall. Between us and the olive groves was a thin yellow ribbon— and a line of soldiers behind it. With guns and tear gas, they made sure that we understood that crossing the yellow ribbon would be dangerous, that they were the people with power. As I stood in Jerusalem and watched Israelis cross under the police line without rebuke, I remembered the sting of tear gas and I realized again just who has power in this situation. What peace will be offered to the Palestinians? Will it be a peace of justice or a peace designed to keep Israelis powerful and Palestinians weak?

Over the next few months, the Olmert government is expected to make a "peace" offer. The Convergence Plan is expected to, at best, claim an Israeli border along the Jordan River, and offer Palestinians most of the West Bank, but divided into north and south sections. Israel will remain in control of the Bethlehem-Jerusalem-Ramallah corridor.

This area represents 95% of the Palestinian economy and most of the potential for economic growth. By depriving Palestinians of an international boarder and the ability to freely develop in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Ramallah, the Israeli government will create a Palestinian state wholly dependent and easily exploitable.

Many analysts expect Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to make this offer and for the Palestinian Authority to reject it. When that happens, Israel is likely to once again claim that the Palestinians are simply not a partner for "peace." My question is, will Americans again be duped?

Will we finally be able to see the effects of what the Israeli government calls a "peace plan"? Or will we once again side with the Israeli government and call Palestinians terrorists for simply wanting an independent, prosperous state?

On the side of the new terminal, the Israeli government wishes peace to all who pass through. The peace they offer, however, is the so-called peace of walls, colonization, and economic subjugation. It's the sort of "peace" that must be enforced by the barrel of a gun. It's the peace that Martin Luther King, Jr. rejected when he embarked on nonviolent protest against segregation and economic exploitation of African Americans. It's the peace that the Palestinians people reject when they use nonviolent protest to demand real, meaningful freedom and justice for themselves and their families. It's time for the American people, who could hold so much power in this situation, to see through what the Israeli government calls "peace" and demand the peace that will come once the military occupation of Palestine has ended. Both Israelis and Palestinians deserve the true peace that will come only with justice. <

## BREAD SHALL BE MY GOLD

By James Mullin

Who cares of gold  
when the wealthy miser is starving  
barley and wheat  
this is true goldness  
sheaves waving their wealth  
in the wind  
lifting on a long single limb  
a bright head of grain  
to be warmed by the sun  
into a nugget of nourishment.

Who cares of gold  
bread shall be my gold  
the crust is thick and satisfying  
a texture of totality  
dark and earthy  
protecting then revealing  
mystery  
of comfort and life-giving.

Who cares of silver  
when the heart is parched  
for my thirst there is water  
clear and pure  
cool and cleansing  
that the dust may leave the soul  
water which shines  
in the simple answer of satisfaction.

Who cares of gold  
when there is bread  
the King gives us his bread  
and this simplicity is treasure enough  
the table and trencher groan  
with the wealthy weight of life  
and even need itself becomes a delight  
for each need has it's companion

thirst has water  
hunger has bread  
loneliness has love  
and Man has the sumptuous feast  
of the love of God.

Who cares of gold  
when man's true currency  
his coin is love  
Man who is made for joy. <



## I'LL NOT GO QUIETLY #2

By Steven Woods

So, I was just sitting there on the grass, not doing anything really. Just kind of laid back hanging out with some friends; people I've never really met before, but know as if they were as close as family. The sun was shining high up in the sky, no clouds marred the great expanse of blue hanging above our heads. The world was all right and I was at peace. I was so caught up in my visions of paradise that I failed to notice at first the rays of light probing my home. It was the banging, and the 'request' for my identification that finally managed to snag my attention. Well, back to reality. I know the easiest course is to just give them what they want, and they'll leave me alone. But, I feel so...violated? Yeah, that's the word. So why should I cooperate? I don't. A simple thing, but I love this little game.

'Woods, what's your number?'

'Shto?' (Russian What)

'Woods, what's your number?'

'Ya Ne Ponemaiyou' (I don't understand)

I suppose that you could call me a bit of a troublemaker. What, with my Mohawk hairstyle (totally against grooming standards!), the little games I play with the security guards at times, and my adamant refusal to adhere to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Death Row policy and procedure. I refuse to allow myself to be lead into the complacent, subjugated existence the majority of my 'peers' resign themselves to. I have always been a non-conforming, rebellious individual. It's who I am. I outgrew the naive assumption I once held early on in my stay here; that if I behave myself and follow all of their rules, then maybe they won't kill me. How did that fatuous notion enter my mind in the first place? It isn't much of a mystery; who ever wants to die? But I am a hostage. My freedom was stolen. My humanity and my life are next. And I should just lie down and submit to my captors? I realize that my actions feed the machine and help it speed along it's path. I've had so many arguments with myself about it. In the end, it all comes down to: How much injustice am I willing to stand? It's not just that I've been treated unfairly

in court. That's a small concern when it's compared to the oppressive treatment I receive just being on Death Row.

So many people are under the misconception that we lead a relatively good life in prison up until the time of our State sanctioned extermination. Through correspondence with various people throughout the world, I've come to know that most picture us walking around a prison complex freely, unrestrained and dangerous, co-mingling with the other prisoners. They see us watching television, working and doing various other activities. The truth of our situation is, at first, often unfathomable to most of them. The truth is that Death Row is one of the most restrictive and inhumane prison environments that the world offers. Prisoners of war (at least, those not held by Bush) are afforded the protective of the Geneva Convention. Here in U.S. Death Row, we're not even protected by our country's constitution. I don't know about the conditions of most States, but I assume they're all vaguely the same, with Arizona and Texas being the worst. Here in Texas, we're 'Housed' in what's termed a 'control unit prison'. Super Maximum Security Segregation the same type of prisons with the same type of programs in place used by the CIA and KGB during the Cold War to 'break' a prisoner. Conditions proved over the years to be psychologically devastating to those subjected to them. This one, on the Polunsky Unit in Livingston, Texas, holds more then 400 condemned in complete isolation. And despite the steady flow of executions and suicides, we're kept at nearly full capacity. We are held in these cages throughout the six to ten years it takes to complete the appeals process, our spirits so severely crushed that death is often a blessing. I don't know how many men I've watched over the years being lead to the death house, eager to finally be done with it all. The laws against cruel and unusual punishment notwithstanding, we are solitarily confined to concrete and steel tombs no bigger than a large bathroom. In 'Normal' Death Row segregation, the best we can get in Texas (that is, not disciplinary segregation), we're locked into these cells, our homes, 23 hours our of every 24. We're let out for one-hour recreation and shower, visitation once a week, medical (when they deem it necessary) or to go to disciplinary court. We're allow an AM/FM radio, hot pot, typewriter (if we can afford them), all purchasable from unit commissary. We're also

allowed and purchase personal hygiene supplies, limited food stuffs and TDCJ approved publications, all of which must be stored at all times in a 2 foot by 2 foot storage space (or risk a disciplinary case and confiscation) under our steel bunks. Our 'homes' are set up in sections of 14 cell, 7 on tier one and 7 above them. They overlook the day room and guards' picket, affording no privacy what so ever. Unlike Arizona, we do have windows in the back of our cells.

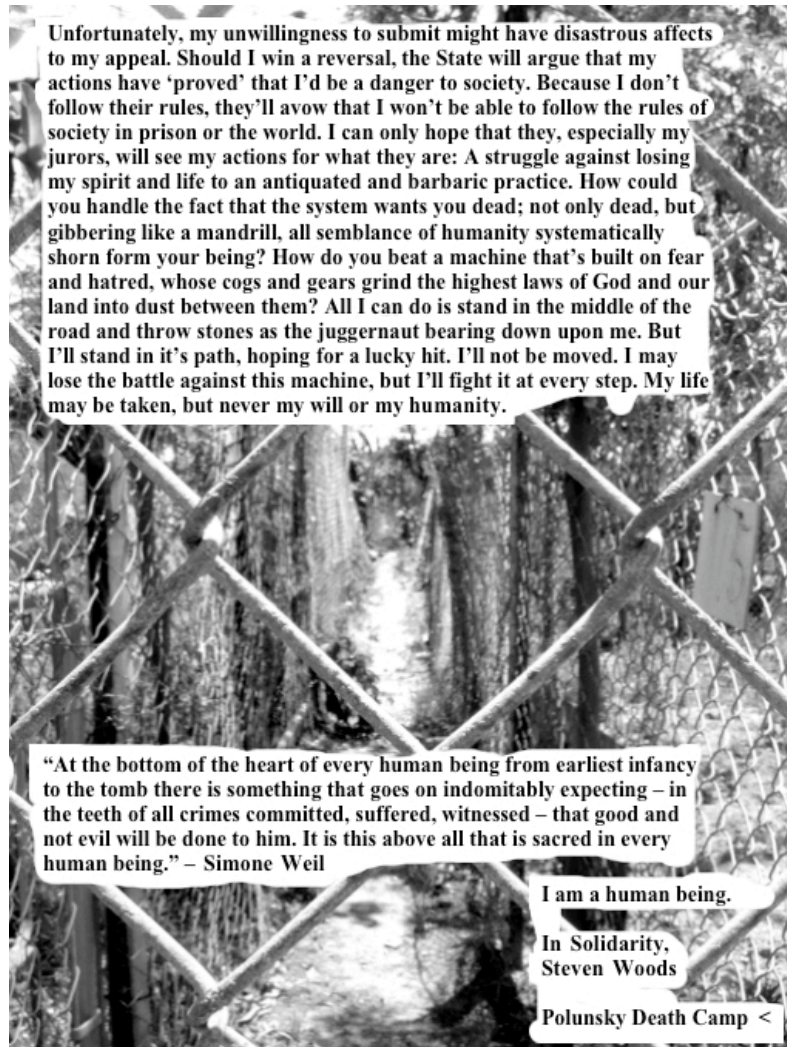
Whether this is a blessing or a curse depends on our state of mind on any given day. For me, it's too hard, too painful to look outside into the world, so I normally keep it covered with paper.

We suffer much at the hands of the guards, these men and women who we must rely on for hygiene, health and safety. To say that they don't like us is putting it rather mildly. There are some guards who are only concerned with doing their jobs, the majority feel it is their job to make our lives hell. They swagger around, secure in their minds that they are the only human beings around. They degrade us constantly, spit in our food and face, and do their best to provoke us into confrontations that can potentially destroy our appeals. These people take pleasure in denying us our sleep, our food, our recreation and showers. Any protest is met with ignorance, some with bogus disciplinary cases that remove what little privilege we have. And that's when we're not just out right ignored.

I'm somewhat ambivalent about recreation. I mentioned that the dayroom, where we recreate normally is situated directly between the guards' picket and the cells in our section. It's nearly a 20 foot by 40 foot cage with nothing but a toilet, table and pull up bar. After a strip search shows we're not carrying anything with us (we can't take anything out of our cells) we're placed in hand restraints to be lead the 15 feet to this cage. We recreate alone, because contact with other human beings is not permitted. Most of us spend our hour walking in circles, working out or talking to the other cells. I don't like recreation much, as it generally makes me feel like something of a caged animal at a zoo, inmates and guards alike staring at me. I rarely spend much of this time talking to the other inmates either. There are several reasons for this, not the least of which is that bonding with someone about to die is hard on the psyche. Another bit turnoff to recreation is that, in a lot of places, there are those

wretches who have been completely broken by the psychological trauma of the isolation and the dehumanization tactics used daily. They throw urine and feces at those in the dayroom, stand at the door and masturbate. It's very disquieting. We are allowed to go 'outside' for recreation each week, which is when I normally take my rec. time. It's not much, but it's quiet and bigger than my cage. All it is a concrete room with bars in place of a roof. A partition of Iron bars runs through the center making it the 'rooms', and another inmate is placed into the second one. This is really the only chance a person here has to feel a little like a human being. I've been on the row for three years now, fighting for my life and my right to be treated like a human being. I spend the majority of my life in disciplinary segregation, as do the precious few others who share my views of our situation.

It's a completely different atmosphere than 'Normal' seg. all together. We rarely receive visitors, only allowed one or two a month (depending on disciplinary status). Recreation is limited to one hour a week in most cases. None of us are allowed to purchase from unit commissary, except stamps and hygiene every two weeks. All of our electrical appliances, and the majority of our other property, is removed and often lost somewhere in the property room. But down here, it's more real, we feel more alive, healthier of mind and more able to fight. This may seem a little obtuse, considering that we're rebelling against our inhumane treatment; why make it worse on ourselves? We desensitize ourselves to their punishments. A cause is only worth as much as we're willing to sacrifice for it. We're showing that we will disrupt and disobey their system as much as we can; that they can't take anything from us that we aren't willing to give up. Pulling the fangs from the serpent's mouth, so to speak. Besides our lives, we're not really asking for much. Nothing more than any other prisoners in the State, even non-Death Row Capital murderers, are allowed to have: To be able to work, attend contact visits with friends and family, walk around unrestrained, go to church, and interact with other inmates; maybe an educational program or a bit of television. All of these things (besides contact visits and our lives) we're even supposed to have, according to the United States Supreme Court. But I doubt it will ever happen.



Unfortunately, my unwillingness to submit might have disastrous affects to my appeal. Should I win a reversal, the State will argue that my actions have 'proved' that I'd be a danger to society. Because I don't follow their rules, they'll avow that I won't be able to follow the rules of society in prison or the world. I can only hope that they, especially my jurors, will see my actions for what they are: A struggle against losing my spirit and life to an antiquated and barbaric practice. How could you handle the fact that the system wants you dead; not only dead, but gibbering like a mandrill, all semblance of humanity systematically shorn from your being? How do you beat a machine that's built on fear and hatred, whose cogs and gears grind the highest laws of God and our land into dust between them? All I can do is stand in the middle of the road and throw stones as the juggernaut bearing down upon me. But I'll stand in it's path, hoping for a lucky hit. I'll not be moved. I may lose the battle against this machine, but I'll fight it at every step. My life may be taken, but never my will or my humanity.

"At the bottom of the heart of every human being from earliest infancy to the tomb there is something that goes on indomitably expecting – in the teeth of all crimes committed, suffered, witnessed – that good and not evil will be done to him. It is this above all that is sacred in every human being." – Simone Weil

I am a human being.

In Solidarity,  
Steven Woods

Polunsky Death Camp <

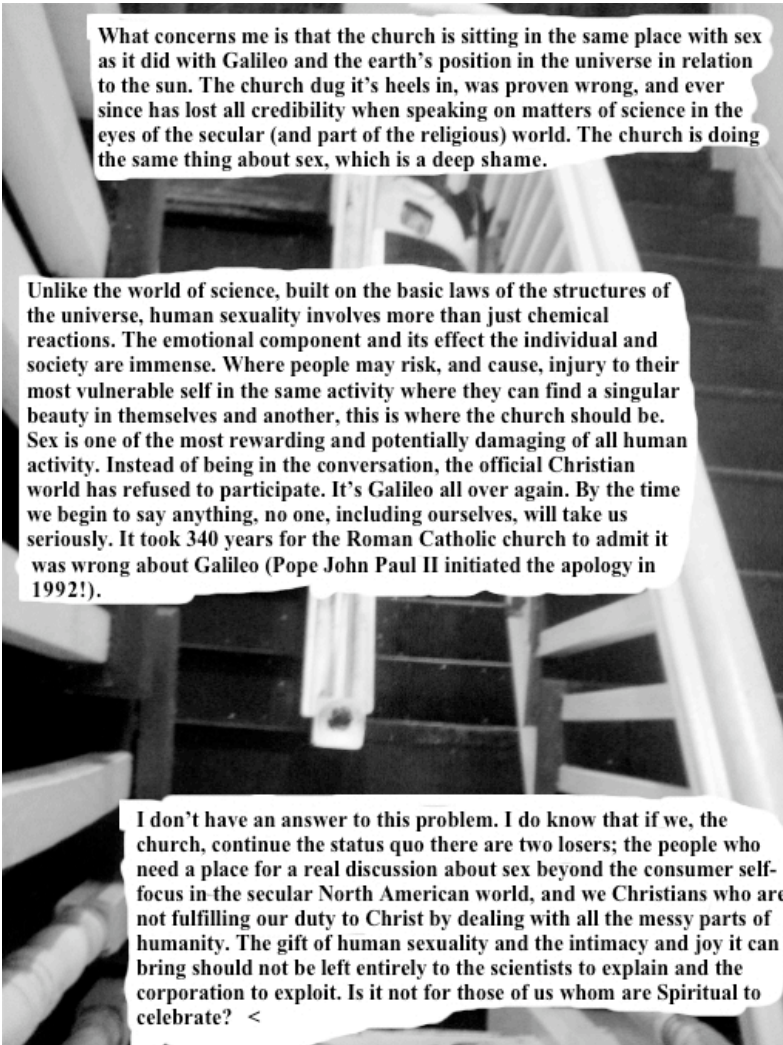
## The Church and Sex I

By Jonathan Hagey-Holmes

One part of the debate, the elephant in the room as it were, over gay marriage and the church is the subject of sex itself. The church has its long history of trying to avoid discussing sex at all except that it's for procreation and only between a married man and woman. This limited conversation conveniently allows the church to avoid discussing pleasure, intimacy and the body and all the intertwining issues. Since being gay is all about sexual preference, and gay sex is only for pleasure, it forces the church to deal with much thornier issues that have huge repercussions on the heterosexual part of the congregation as well. The church is very nervous about that. The problem is that the cat's out of the bag and has been for sometime. Sex is fun and, while it does have serious risks it's a far cry from being as dangerous as playing with guns, taking recreational drugs or even smoking. We Christians are a far cry from attempting something like the Kama Sutra, a Hindu guide to love and sex from the 1st century.

Of course I've always found the hesitancy of Christians to discuss sex outside of this limited scope strange considering the prevalence and importance human sexual relations play in the Bible. Consider Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist described in the very beginning of the Gospel of Luke. Both are well on in years and could not have children. Before Viagra and fertility drugs the best aphrodisiac - an angel sent by God! And what of Lot and his two daughters after the fall of Sodom? Lot is made drunk by his two daughters so they can become pregnant by him in Genesis 19:30. No punishment by God is ever recorded for either Lot or his daughters, but that's another discussion for another time! And this is after Lot has saved two angels from gang rape by an angry mob of men, Genesis 19:1-11. And let's not forget the erotic nature of the Song of Solomon!





What concerns me is that the church is sitting in the same place with sex as it did with Galileo and the earth's position in the universe in relation to the sun. The church dug its heels in, was proven wrong, and ever since has lost all credibility when speaking on matters of science in the eyes of the secular (and part of the religious) world. The church is doing the same thing about sex, which is a deep shame.

Unlike the world of science, built on the basic laws of the structures of the universe, human sexuality involves more than just chemical reactions. The emotional component and its effect the individual and society are immense. Where people may risk, and cause, injury to their most vulnerable self in the same activity where they can find a singular beauty in themselves and another, this is where the church should be. Sex is one of the most rewarding and potentially damaging of all human activity. Instead of being in the conversation, the official Christian world has refused to participate. It's Galileo all over again. By the time we begin to say anything, no one, including ourselves, will take us seriously. It took 340 years for the Roman Catholic church to admit it was wrong about Galileo (Pope John Paul II initiated the apology in 1992!).

I don't have an answer to this problem. I do know that if we, the church, continue the status quo there are two losers; the people who need a place for a real discussion about sex beyond the consumer self-focus in the secular North American world, and we Christians who are not fulfilling our duty to Christ by dealing with all the messy parts of humanity. The gift of human sexuality and the intimacy and joy it can bring should not be left entirely to the scientists to explain and the corporation to exploit. Is it not for those of us whom are Spiritual to celebrate? <

### On Being A Jesus Freak By Lisa Farrall

Reading some of the stuff I've written, I guess its becoming fairly obvious that I have a few issues with white Anglo patriarchal society.

I have a lot of sympathy for anyone who has felt marginalised by society, felt a vibe of being left out or not good enough because of their skin, hair, face, age or gender.

Even clothing these days can be enough to draw you a "not cool" vibe that can kick off a downward spiral into despair.

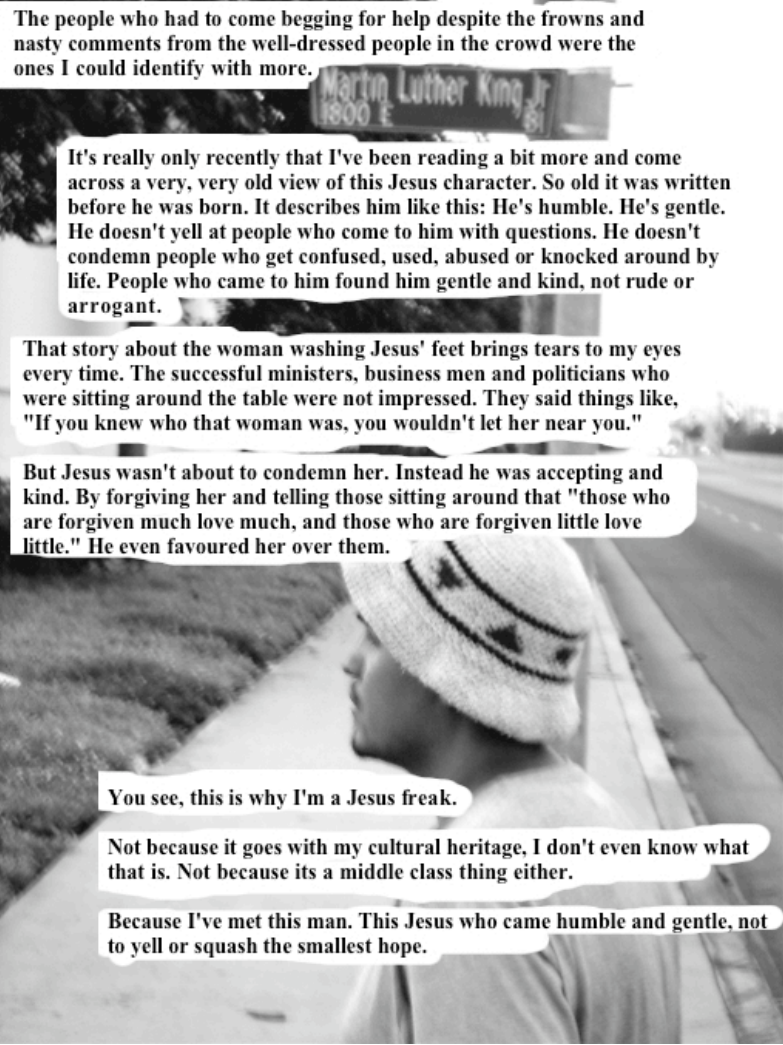
I'm adopted. I have no way of knowing, so far, where my blood comes from. I've had enough unpleasant experiences with old white guys in suits to significantly affect my perception of managers, politicians and ministers.

I had enough bad experiences in my childhood to affect the way I see things and the way I feel about myself. When you feel like you're the odd one out, the left-over or otherwise not accepted, its difficult to see life as a great opportunity, full of potential and purpose. I know, I've been there many times.

Our entire culture at the moment seems to be better at pigeon-holing and excluding people than encouraging and celebrating differences.

We are surrounded by images of people who are happy, healthy, successful or popular. Unfortunately for many of us, these images are much different to what we see in the mirror or our day to day life.

So many times, listening to people talk about God, I felt more like the wretch dragged into the middle of the gang, waiting for people to start throwing stones than any of the onlookers in the story.



The people who had to come begging for help despite the frowns and nasty comments from the well-dressed people in the crowd were the ones I could identify with more.

It's really only recently that I've been reading a bit more and come across a very, very old view of this Jesus character. So old it was written before he was born. It describes him like this: He's humble. He's gentle. He doesn't yell at people who come to him with questions. He doesn't condemn people who get confused, used, abused or knocked around by life. People who came to him found him gentle and kind, not rude or arrogant.

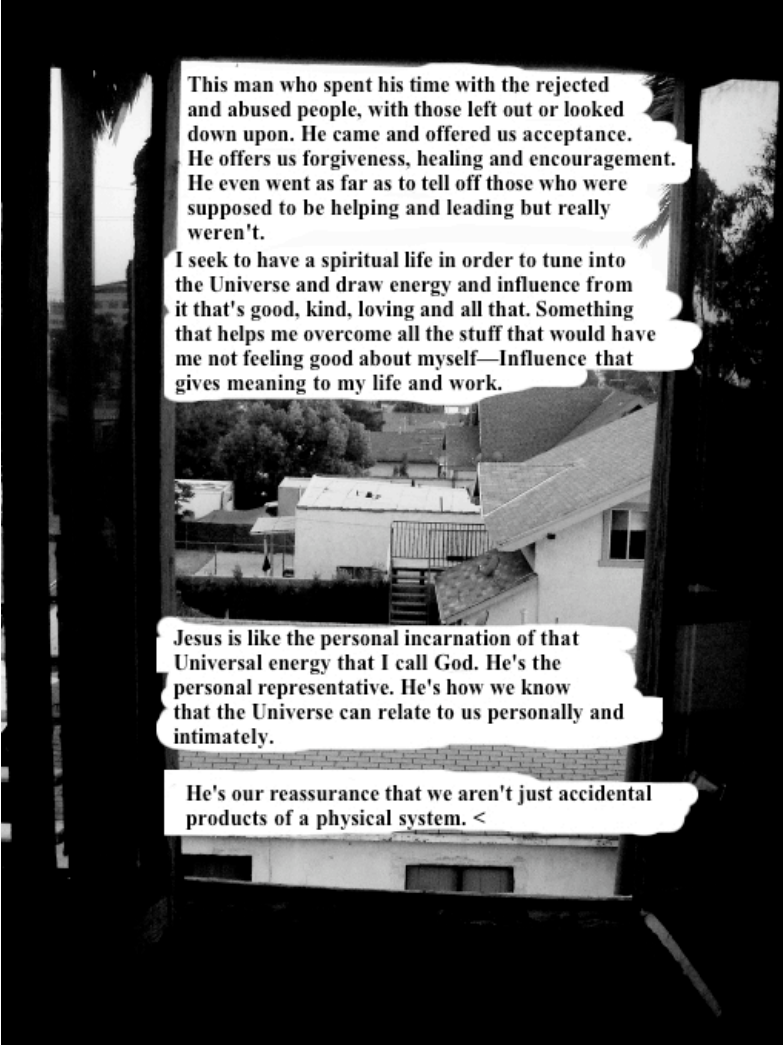
That story about the woman washing Jesus' feet brings tears to my eyes every time. The successful ministers, business men and politicians who were sitting around the table were not impressed. They said things like, "If you knew who that woman was, you wouldn't let her near you."

But Jesus wasn't about to condemn her. Instead he was accepting and kind. By forgiving her and telling those sitting around that "those who are forgiven much love much, and those who are forgiven little love little." He even favoured her over them.

You see, this is why I'm a Jesus freak.

Not because it goes with my cultural heritage, I don't even know what that is. Not because it's a middle class thing either.

Because I've met this man. This Jesus who came humble and gentle, not to yell or squash the smallest hope.



This man who spent his time with the rejected and abused people, with those left out or looked down upon. He came and offered us acceptance. He offers us forgiveness, healing and encouragement. He even went as far as to tell off those who were supposed to be helping and leading but really weren't.

I seek to have a spiritual life in order to tune into the Universe and draw energy and influence from it that's good, kind, loving and all that. Something that helps me overcome all the stuff that would have me not feeling good about myself—Influence that gives meaning to my life and work.

Jesus is like the personal incarnation of that Universal energy that I call God. He's the personal representative. He's how we know that the Universe can relate to us personally and intimately.

He's our reassurance that we aren't just accidental products of a physical system. <

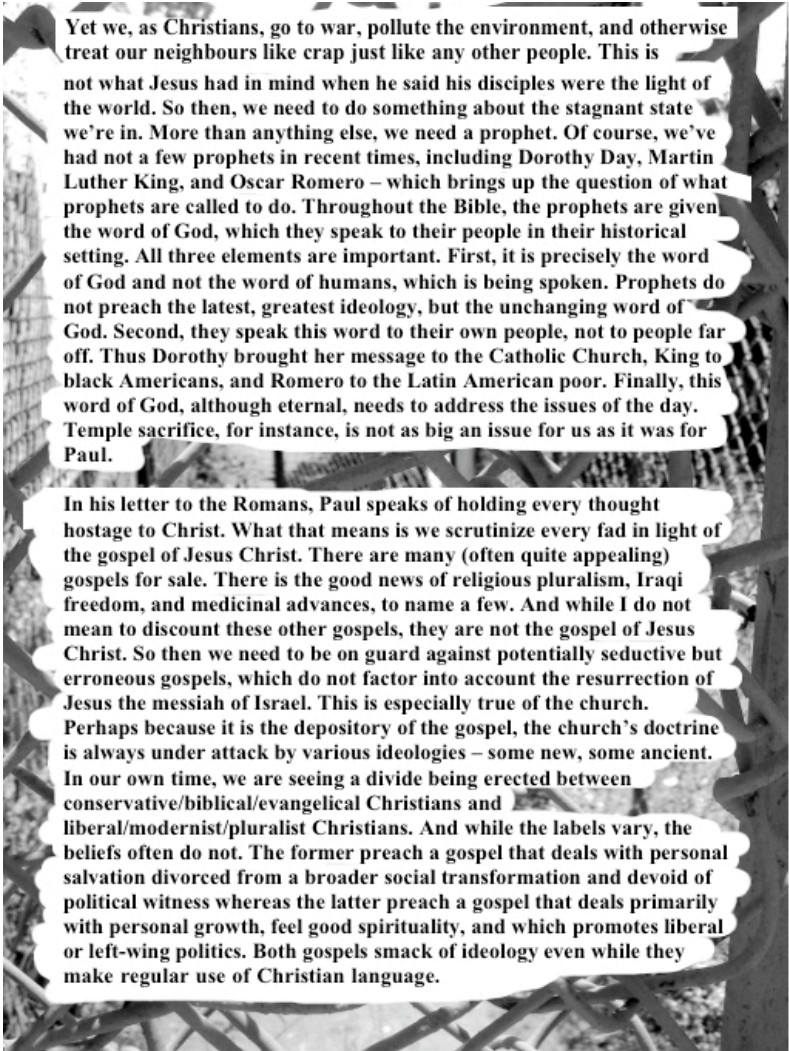


## In Two Days

By Michael Friesen

In two days, I read through Isaiah to Zephaniah. Throughout the week, I have managed to read from Genesis to Zephaniah. The week before, I read the entire New Testament. I'm not boasting, but I feel I have a few insights to share having read as much. Of course, I attribute most of these insights to the Spirit of God working through the texts, but it takes two to tango all the same. What struck me? First and foremost, I was struck by the thematic unity of the Bible. I know a bit ago I wrote the Qur'an has a unity that the Bible lacks on account of the former having one author as compared to dozens, but what I meant was the perspective of the Bible changes frequently. Today, I'm speaking about something else: the major themes of the Bible. You see, the Bible, unlike the Qur'an, offers a history of the world which envisions God working through a small tribe of people to bring salvation to the entire world. This tribe was something of a nuisance for God: they rarely obeyed his directives and were often in a state of outright rebellion against his rule. Nevertheless, God stuck with this peculiar people (to borrow the language of the King James Bible) despite their many failings. Eventually, God sent his own son who fulfilled the Torah and then offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the entire world. This brought about the great reconciliation which Christians know as the gospel. That's the basic story, as far as we know. It could be there is yet another chapter, perhaps even another book, to be written, but for now we know only that we are living in the reign of Christ (Anno Domini as our less politically-correct calendars would have it). What follows?

The church is in a funk and has been in a funk since the time the apostles began dying out. Of course, all didn't go to Hell overnight, but right now we're in a pretty bad place. Atheists look at the history of the church and they think, 'This is God's people, huh?' Can anyone blame them for not believing in God if we're his royal ambassadors? Bet you never thought of yourself as an ambassador for Christ, huh? Don't feel bad: neither do most Christians. Still, that's what we're called to be: heralds of God's kingdom.



Yet we, as Christians, go to war, pollute the environment, and otherwise treat our neighbours like crap just like any other people. This is not what Jesus had in mind when he said his disciples were the light of the world. So then, we need to do something about the stagnant state we're in. More than anything else, we need a prophet. Of course, we've had not a few prophets in recent times, including Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, and Oscar Romero – which brings up the question of what prophets are called to do. Throughout the Bible, the prophets are given the word of God, which they speak to their people in their historical setting. All three elements are important. First, it is precisely the word of God and not the word of humans, which is being spoken. Prophets do not preach the latest, greatest ideology, but the unchanging word of God. Second, they speak this word to their own people, not to people far off. Thus Dorothy brought her message to the Catholic Church, King to black Americans, and Romero to the Latin American poor. Finally, this word of God, although eternal, needs to address the issues of the day. Temple sacrifice, for instance, is not as big an issue for us as it was for Paul.

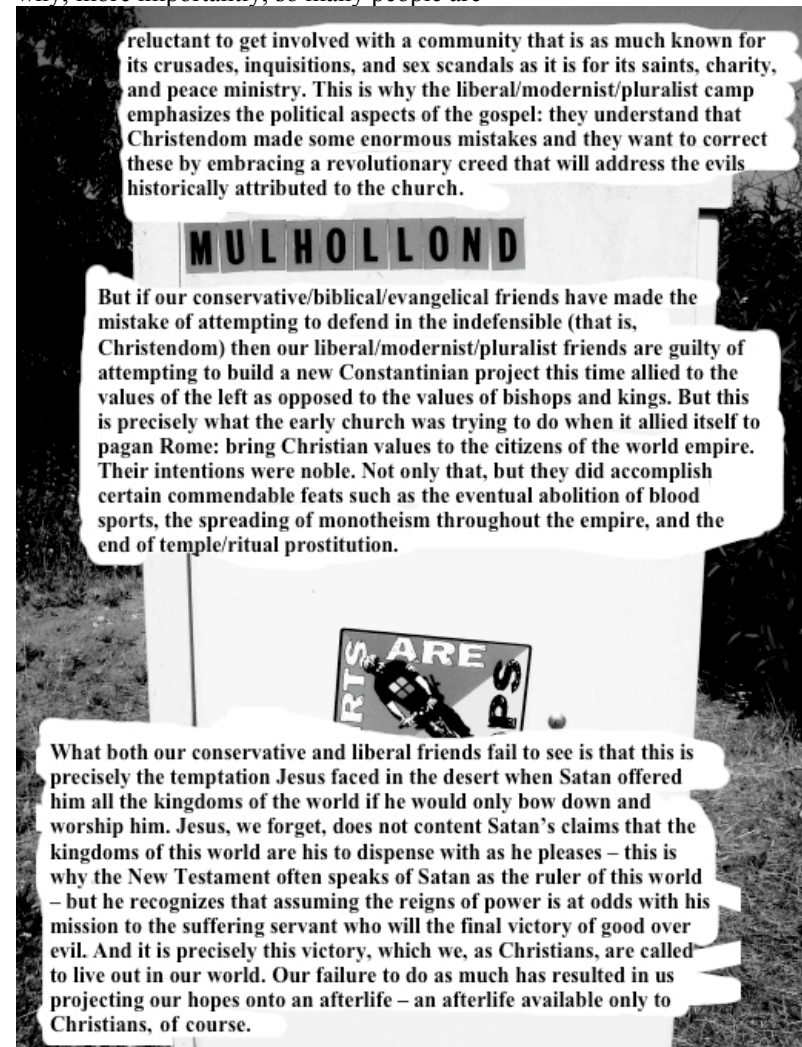
In his letter to the Romans, Paul speaks of holding every thought hostage to Christ. What that means is we scrutinize every fad in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are many (often quite appealing) gospels for sale. There is the good news of religious pluralism, Iraqi freedom, and medicinal advances, to name a few. And while I do not mean to discount these other gospels, they are not the gospel of Jesus Christ. So then we need to be on guard against potentially seductive but erroneous gospels, which do not factor into account the resurrection of Jesus the messiah of Israel. This is especially true of the church. Perhaps because it is the depository of the gospel, the church's doctrine is always under attack by various ideologies – some new, some ancient. In our own time, we are seeing a divide being erected between conservative/biblical/evangelical Christians and liberal/modernist/pluralist Christians. And while the labels vary, the beliefs often do not. The former preach a gospel that deals with personal salvation divorced from a broader social transformation and devoid of political witness whereas the latter preach a gospel that deals primarily with personal growth, feel good spirituality, and which promotes liberal or left-wing politics. Both gospels smack of ideology even while they make regular use of Christian language.



What is the prophet to do in this context? According to the liberal/modernist/pluralist camp, the prophet is to denounce 'fundamentalism' in religion and proclaim the virtues of the ecumenical project. According to the conservative/biblical/evangelical camp, the prophet is to denounce 'postmodernism' and proclaim the virtues of law and order, church and state, family and nation. In fact, the prophet is called to do neither of these things. Above all, the prophet is called to reorient the church towards its *raison d'être*: witness to the nations by living in the light of the risen Lord. This may sound very 'spiritual' but in fact it is enormously mundane. In essence, we are called to be a sign of God's reconciliation which has been made available to all of us through the death and resurrection of his son, Jesus Christ. Here the conservatives think, 'Alright! We're back to the gospel of personal salvation!' Not at all! Of course, we believe that God cares about us as individuals and can say with Paul that Jesus loves us and gave his life for us. That is essential to the Christian message – I could hardly ignore it. But at the same time, this belief has enormous implications for how we live our lives. After all, if the Reformers are right and we are justified by the grace of God then our salvation is wholly unmerited. We have been forgiven for no other reason than God loves us and wants us to share in the kingdom he has prepared through his son. If we really believe this with all our hearts then how can we refuse to let this belief guide the course of our lives, the decisions we make, and the priorities we set?

In order to win our salvation, Jesus had to renounce family, nation, and even his own life, dying as he did on a Roman cross at the ripe age of thirty-three. What we often forget is that Jesus calls us to share in this vocation by bearing our own cross. In doing so, we witness to the love of Jesus Christ such that the nations may look at the church and declare, 'See how these Christians love each other!' Nor is our love some sort of sentimental affair. Rather, it is a sacrificial love based on the example given to us by this same Jesus of Nazareth who willingly went to his death in order to win the salvation of his enemies. If this is true, then we not only can no longer cast the stone, but we have strong reason to love our enemies the way Jesus loved us: by laying down our lives for them. This, of course, is precisely what

the church has failed to do for the last seventeen hundred years and why, more importantly, so many people are



So then that is the message I wish to share for the day. Repeatedly, YHWY had to remind Israel that they were not chosen for their own sake – that is, for the sake of their own salvation – but rather they were chosen to bring their salvation to the broader world. When they failed to do so, YHWY withdrew his salvation from his people. We are again caught in that cycle. Fortunately, Jesus has ensured our salvation for good, which means we need not fear about YHWY abandoning us in our difficult journey. Indeed, we know, as the Israelites knew before us: that we may go ahead, knowing that YHWY is with us; we need only hold our peace and let him lead the way. <



Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Pray for us.

# Death to the Lungs of Los Angeles, An obituary for the South Central Farm By Chris Rooney

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> I arrived in LA to spend a month volunteering in the LA Catholic Worker Community. Before I came, I had never heard of the South Central Los Angeles Farm. It was only gradually, over time that I became aware of the struggle of this neighbourhood to save their land from being developed, land that they had worked for years, some even for more than a decade.

Vancouver, the city I call home, has many small community gardens and the concept of urban farming is not foreign to me. But in LA, a city with very little green space--where even the little nature that exists has to fight it's way through the cracks in the pavement--I've found it very hard to understand why the municipal government would try and take away something which is so urgently needed.

If you are like me then you are probably new to the story of this farm, you know that a couple of celebrities have recently involved themselves in the fight, you know that Darryl Hannah sat in a walnut tree on the farm when the marshals and the LAPD were called in to enforce the eviction notice and that they destroyed many of the crops. If you are like me then all of this fray might seem quite sudden, something obscure and typically un-newsworthy just exploded briefly onto the international spectacle and has disappeared almost as fast from our public discourse.

Being at Ammon Hennacy House I've met some of the farmers and some of the farm's supporters. We would pray for the farm in our liturgical celebrations and at the start of our days serving in the hippie kitchen. I would occasionally read short news releases on Yahoo! news or in the LA Times, mostly press releases--short things--they never gave more than the digestible media pabulum I've come to expect from many news outlets.

One day--the day after the eviction was enforced by the man-hands of the LAPD--I met a kid who had been arrested by law enforcement agents because he was standing across the street from the farm as it was being

dissected. He shared his experiences with those of us in the house. His story was infuriating and I asked him to write something about it for this issue, as I write this I am still waiting on his piece. He gave me the URL for the farmers and encouraged me to visit the ruins for myself telling me of their nightly vigils at 7:00pm.

Almost a week went by, my mom came down to visit and I took the opportunity to go see what was left of the farm. We got there in the early afternoon; a woman from the community walked us around much of the periphery and told us her story in connection with the farm. Much of the neighbourhood was tied to this place in some way or another it was a focal point for the whole community. As she and my mom walked on ahead I took as many pictures of what I saw as I was able, the story of the sale and court battle and eviction evokes the same frustration every time I've heard it.

The farm fed people; it sustained them, broke up the urban wasteland of warehouses, cleaned the water, the air, the soil, and refreshed the souls of the farmers and their families. The farm was a safe place for children and parents, it was a respite, it was empowering for the people of South Central Los Angeles, it allowed them to participate in something that they could believe in, it allowed for many people to support their families with food and money from crops supplementing their incomes. As we three walked along and I caught up with the ladies I could hear my mom comment on how criminal it all sounded, the backroom dealings between city council members and land developers which sold the farm out from under the neighbourhood, the petty selfishness of the developer, the five acres of land underneath power lines which was offered to the farmers in exchange for their 14 acres of well worked and beloved farm. The land felt defeated in the scorching California sun even as its corn, camomile, and medicinal plants gave off their beautiful aromas in the hot breeze. We left the farm and drove to Santa Monica to do some sight seeing and get some lunch in us before the vigil began at 7:00. When we got back to the farm after fighting through the rush hour madness on the freeways, I talked with the media liaison for the South Central Farmers. She told me about the City Council representative for South Central and

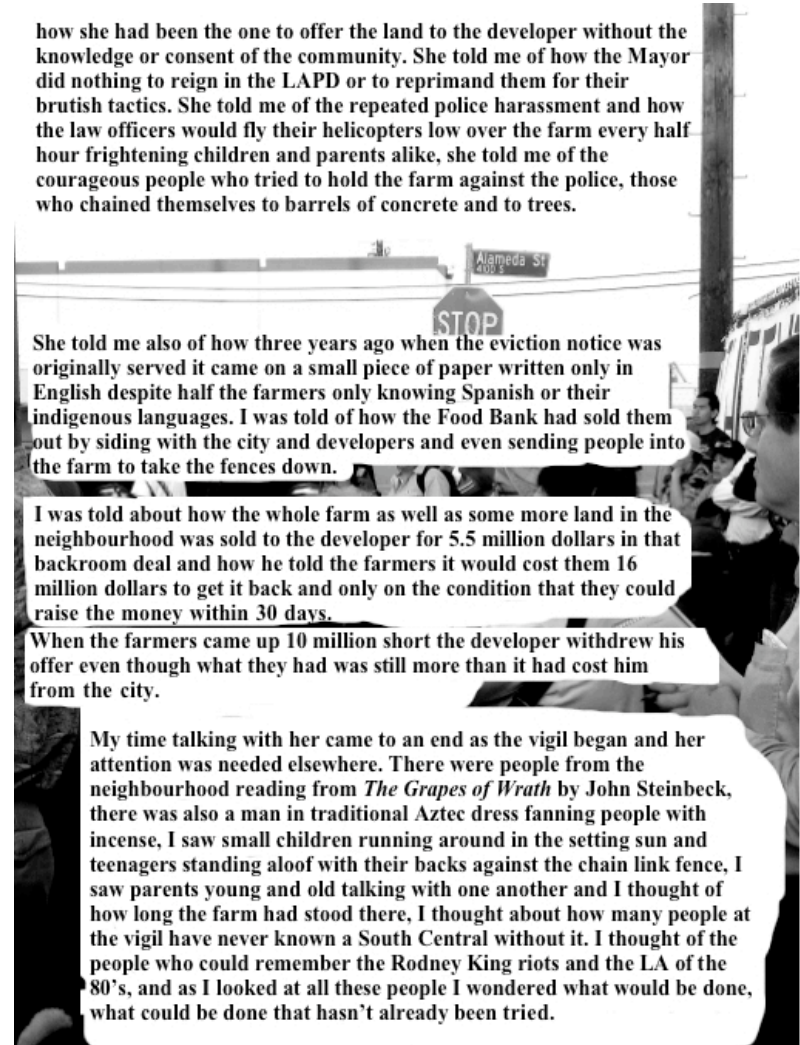
how she had been the one to offer the land to the developer without the knowledge or consent of the community. She told me of how the Mayor did nothing to reign in the LAPD or to reprimand them for their brutish tactics. She told me of the repeated police harassment and how the law officers would fly their helicopters low over the farm every half hour frightening children and parents alike, she told me of the courageous people who tried to hold the farm against the police, those who chained themselves to barrels of concrete and to trees.

She told me also of how three years ago when the eviction notice was originally served it came on a small piece of paper written only in English despite half the farmers only knowing Spanish or their indigenous languages. I was told of how the Food Bank had sold them out by siding with the city and developers and even sending people into the farm to take the fences down.

I was told about how the whole farm as well as some more land in the neighbourhood was sold to the developer for 5.5 million dollars in that backroom deal and how he told the farmers it would cost them 16 million dollars to get it back and only on the condition that they could raise the money within 30 days.

When the farmers came up 10 million short the developer withdrew his offer even though what they had was still more than it had cost him from the city.

My time talking with her came to an end as the vigil began and her attention was needed elsewhere. There were people from the neighbourhood reading from *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, there was also a man in traditional Aztec dress fanning people with incense, I saw small children running around in the setting sun and teenagers standing aloof with their backs against the chain link fence, I saw parents young and old talking with one another and I thought of how long the farm had stood there, I thought about how many people at the vigil have never known a South Central without it. I thought of the people who could remember the Rodney King riots and the LA of the 80's, and as I looked at all these people I wondered what would be done, what could be done that hasn't already been tried.







The feeling at this vigil was that of something beautiful, intimate and important being lost. I was reminded of how some friends of mine—

Protestant seminarians in Vancouver—had organised a memorial service for a homeless man who used to spend his long days on the campus talking with its students and begging for food and for change. I remembered that memorial and how everyone there knew this man quite well, some even for years, they spoke of him as a friend and as a teacher. To the city of Vancouver he was a statistic, an alcoholic, heroin addict, a homeless man, but to these people and to that campus he was loved and worth remembering. At both of these memorials I was an outsider, at both of these funerals I was previously unaware of the importance or indeed even the existence of both the departed, and in both of these instances those responsible for the deaths will remain unpunished for their theft of life. <



Drawn by Karen Pink

We Believe So We Speak  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:13

Gerardo Gomez is a Resident of Los Angeles, a supporter of the South Central Farmers and a volunteer at "the Hippie Kitchen" run by the LA Catholic Worker community.

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Steven Woods is currently serving a death sentence at a Federal prison in Texas. He has a blog at [www.anarchyinchains.com](http://www.anarchyinchains.com) if you would like to write to Steven you can send mail to Steven Woods #999427 Polunsky Unit 3872 FM 350 S Livingston, TX 77351

Lisa Farall is a writer, mother and rock climber from Australia, she writes and try to work out how to follow Jesus in a country where his words have been twisted to support the kind of religious abuse he opposed.

Toronto Coalition to Stop the War is Toronto's city-wide anti-war coalition, made up of more than 50 labour, faith and community organizations, and a member of the Canadian Peace Alliance. Their article is reprinted with permission here from [rabble.ca](http://rabble.ca)

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Thank you again for reading.  
Chris Rooney, and Karl Germyn  
Editors, The Christian Radical



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All the photographs in this issue were taken by Chris Rooney in Los Angeles between May and June 2006, most of it comes from the site of the former South Central Farm on Alameda and Martin Luther King Boulevard.